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YEAR END
BOSTON
Monday, December 24, 2012
letters@metro.us

Thank you for making dreams come true

Metro readers purchased hundreds of gifts for children in need this holiday season Toys for Tots, Heading Home once again receive toys from Metro Magic {page 10}

NICOLAUS CZARNECKI/METRO

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year in review

Metro staffers look back at favorites of 2012

'Moonrise Kingdom,' 'channel ORANGE' and 'The Mindy Project' top our lists Plus, authors pick their favorite books {pages 12-19}

sports

The top stories in Boston sports of 2012

Raisman triumphs Patriots and Celtics nearly grab titles Sox with fire sale {page 26}

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The year that was

COURTNEY SACCO/METRO

▶ The blackout

Boston 2012: Here's our look at the year in news The biggest stories to hit the Hub's courts, colleges, government and public transit system

METRO FILE PHOTOS

▶ Thirty-five people were injured in the Green Line crash.

The tasty center of a controversy

Boston 2012

Metro reporters take a look back at the biggest stories to happen in the Hub this year.

BU suffers through tough year

A string of bad incidents left the Boston University community suffering a series of tragic and controversial events.

In February, two of the college's hockey players were accused of rape and sexual assault, but the charges were later dropped. However, one of the players did plead guilty to groping a resident adviser.

In April, police responded to an Allston home and found fraternity pledges duct-taped and stripped in the basement. Some of the students later admitted to the hazing.

And in May, three students were killed in a car crash while studying abroad in New Zealand. A BU student who was driving pleaded guilty to careless driving and was banned from driving in the country.

A month before that, a graduate student was fatally shot in Allston and this fall two students were killed while riding their bicycles.

The year of the power outages

For some Bay State residents, 2012 may be recalled as the year of the blackouts.

Tens of thousands of homes and businesses lost power for days from various incidents including the Back Bay transformer fire in March, downed trees from Hurricane Sandy in October and infrastructure issues in Cambridge in November.

A second brief, but widespread power outage in the Back Bay two months after the transformer fire led to the City Council holding a hearing to seek answers from utility companies.

Green Line trolley crash at Boylston

The driver of a Green Line trolley that slammed into the back of a stationary train at Boylston Station on Nov. 29 was found to be solely responsible for the crash, which sent 35 people to the hospital.

The driver, who admitted to having worked an overnight shift at a secret second job the night before, was fired following a six-day investigation.

The crash cost the struggling transit agency over $500,000 in damage.

Menino's clucking prompts debate

Mayor Thomas Menino's feathers were ruffled when the president of Chick-fil-A made anti-gay comments that prompted Menino to express his anger and ask the chain not to open in a private building in Boston. From there the controversy sparked a national eat-at-Chick-fil-A-day and a counter-protest that involved a same-sex kiss in at Chick-fil-A stores.

WFNX goes to bed

Boston's beloved alternative station WFNX went off the air in July to the sound of The Cure's "Let's Go to Bed."

The last DJ to helm a 101.7 broadcast gave a brief goodbye before signing off after 29 years. Phoenix Media/Communications Group sold the station for more than $14 million to Clear Channel.

Clear Channel then turned the station into 101.7 The Harbor, before announcing it would again change the format to an electronic dance music station, 101.7 Evolution.WFNX has continued as an online radio station.

Drug lab failure causes crisis

In August, state police announced that a rogue chemist had potentially tampered with thousands of evidence samples at a state drug lab in Jamaica Plain that led to the release of about 200 inmates across the state. The chemist has pleaded not guilty.

More on page 4

Justice sought twice in Mattapan

The aftershock from one of the most horrific crimes in recent Boston history did not diminish in 2012 even though it had been two years since the actual violence.

Two men charged with the killing of four people in Mattapan, including a 2-year-old boy and his mother, went on trial in February and the jury was unable to return a guilty verdict.

One man was acquitted and the jury was deadlocked on Dwayne Moore, the accused gunman, forcing a retrial that started in November. The horrific details of the murders were recalled again during the second trial that ended in December with a Worcester County jury finding Moore guilty. He was sentenced to life in jail without parole and his lawyer said he plans to appeal. Family members of the victims were relieved after the guilty verdict and sentence and said that the souls of the victims could finally rest.

POOL PHOTO

▶ Moore

Harvard scandal: 125 students investigated for cheating

Harvard University announced on Aug. 30 that it was investigating about 125 undergraduates accused of cheating on a take-home final exam in the spring.

The Harvard Gazette first reported that about half the students in a class of more than 250 were suspected of either working together to come up with answers, or copying off of each other.

While the school did not name the course, The Crimson reported it was "Introduction to Congress."

In a letter to students, Jay Harris, dean of undergraduate education, reminded students to embrace academic integrity.

▶ Harvard has yet to release any of the investigation's findings.

NICOLAUS CZARNECKI/METRO

By the numbers

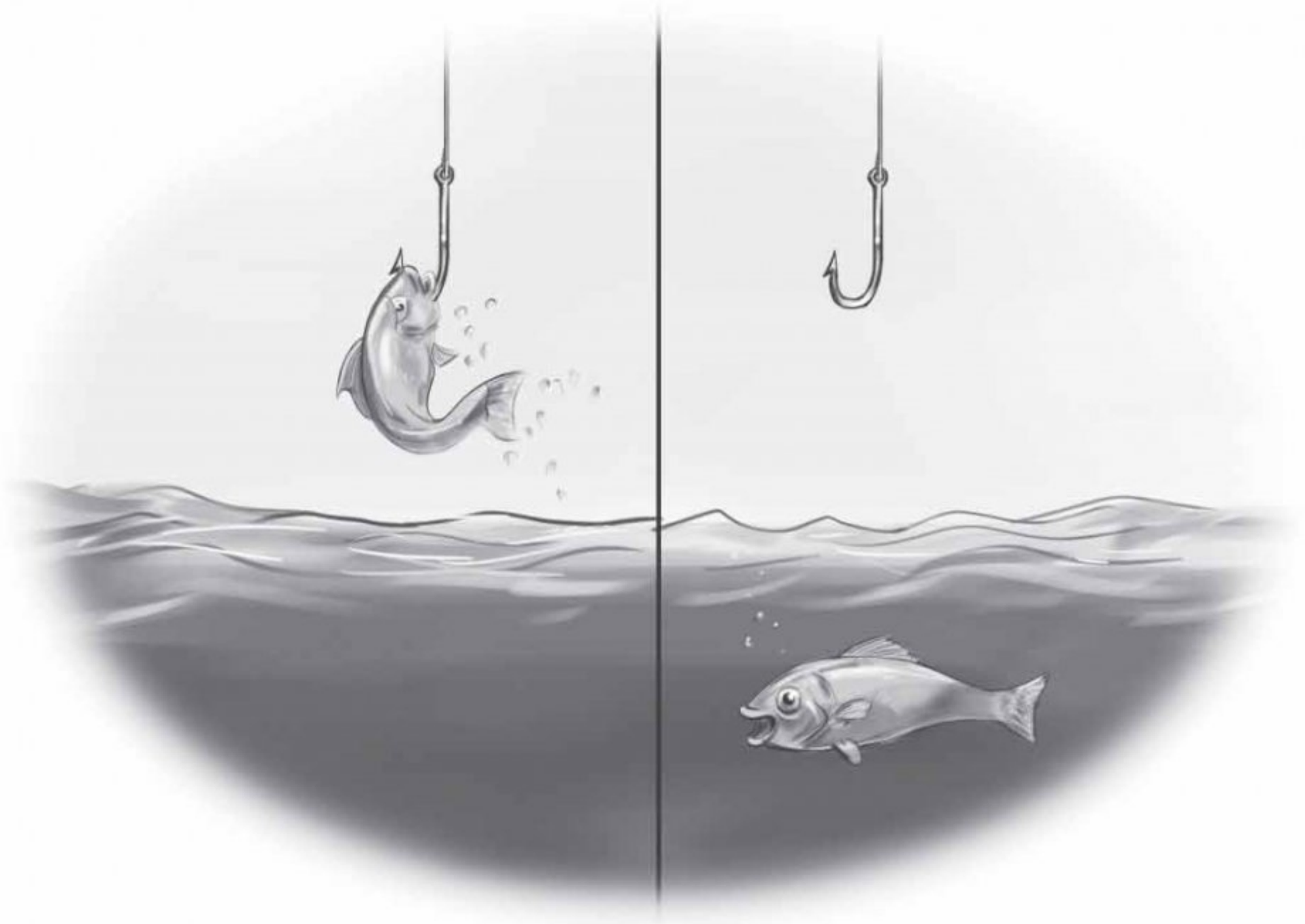
31

Mayor Thomas Menino fell ill in October with a blood clot and a virus and ended up spending about a month at Brigham and Women's Hospital. His stay was prolonged when he suffered a compression fracture in his vertebrae. Doctors also diagnosed him with Type 2 diabetes. Menino, who turned 70 in December, is Boston's longest serving mayor. His health and age have led to questions on if he will run in 2013. METRO

Tweet of the year

"My Doctor says seals are high in cholesterol, so I'm trying to eat less seal and more people. #Capewhitesh ark"

@CAPEWHITESHARK (TWEETED ON JULY 31) THE CAPE COD SHARK TOOK TO TWITTER OVER THE SUMMER TO KEEP SWIMMERS UP-TO-DATE ON HIS BUSY LIFE.



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Whitey's gal pal admits guilt, sent to federal prison

It's a long way from Santa Monica to Minnesota and no one knows that better than Catherine Greig.

▶ Greig

The 61-year-old longtime girlfriend of alleged mob boss James "Whitey" Bulger pleaded guilty in March to crimes including harboring a fugitive and was sentenced to eight years in a federal prison in Minnesota.

During her sentencing, an angry and emotional Steven Davis, whose sister Debra was allegedly killed by Bulger, said "Catherine, you're a dirty bitch." Bulger's trial is set for June and is expected to be an equally emotion-filled event.

'Best of' (contin.)

Medical marijuana passes in Mass.

On Election Day Massachusetts voted to allow the use of medical marijuana, which has been used to treat patients suffering from cancer, Alzheimer's disease, HIV/AIDS and glaucoma.

About 63 percent of voters approved the measure.

As a result, all New England states but New Hampshire now have legalized it in some form.

Dewey Square mural sparks frenzy of bigoted comments

A 70-foot mural that was erected in Dewey Square in August sparked a heated Internet discussion on whether the character depicted in the artwork looked like a "terrorist."

After a local news outlet posted picture of the mural on its Facebook page asking people what the mural resembled, hundreds of people responded by saying it looked like a "Muslim terrorist."

ALL PHOTOS: METRO FILE PHOTOS

▶ People protested the MBTA fare hike.

The ACLU responded by calling the remarks "ugly racist postings" that were "troubling."

Its Brazilian creators, Gustavo and Otavio Pandolfo, known as "Os Gemeos," named their mural "The Giant of Boston." It is one of two new murals that the brothers created over the summer as part of their exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art.

The mural is not permanent; however, it is still on display.

First MBTA fare hikes in five years

In April, the MassDOT Board of Directors voted to raise the cost to take the T by an average of 23 percent, while cutting services to some buses and weekend Commuter Rail routes, a change that went into effect on July 1.

Subway fares rose from $1.70 to $2 for passengers who pay with CharlieCards, and bus fares rose by a quarter, to $1.50. The Ride, a para-transit service for the elderly and disabled, doubled to $4.

The increases were imposed to help close the system's $160 million deficit, but that didn't make it any easier on angry strapholders.

Following the vote in April, riders rallied, booed and chanted "shame on you," and in the summer, there were protests and fare evasion demonstrations. ● MICHAEL NAUGHTON AND MORGAN ROSSEAU

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Famous reindeer Rudolph did have a red nose

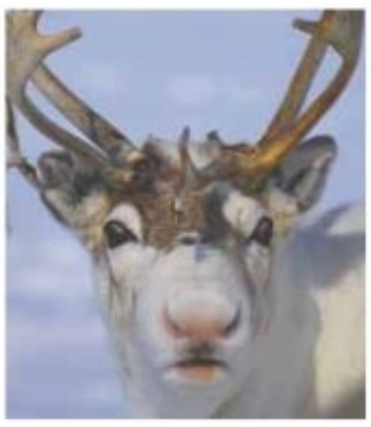
He is a subject of mockery in the Christmas song, but Rudolph's red nose is real and well adapted to his environment, scientists from Holland and Norway claim.

A comparative study of human and reindeer noses, published in the British Medical Journal, found that the North Pole creatures have a 25 percent higher density of blood vessels. This improves their circulation, and keeps both the nose and brain from freezing, while giving it a distinctive red tint.

"These factors explain why the nose of Rudolph, the lead flying reindeer employed by Santa Claus to pull his sleigh, is red and well adapted to carrying out his duties in extreme temperature," says study author Can Ince of Erasmus Medical Center in Rotterdam.

25%

A comparative study of human and reindeer noses, published in the British Medical Journal, found that reindeer have a 25 percent higher density of blood vessels.



The same study investigated human nasal circulation in different states, including under the influence of alcohol and cocaine. Both contributed a dramatic reddening effect, prompting the recommendation that we should be leaving healthier foods for Santa and his reindeer. **KIERON MONKS, METRO WORLD NEWS**

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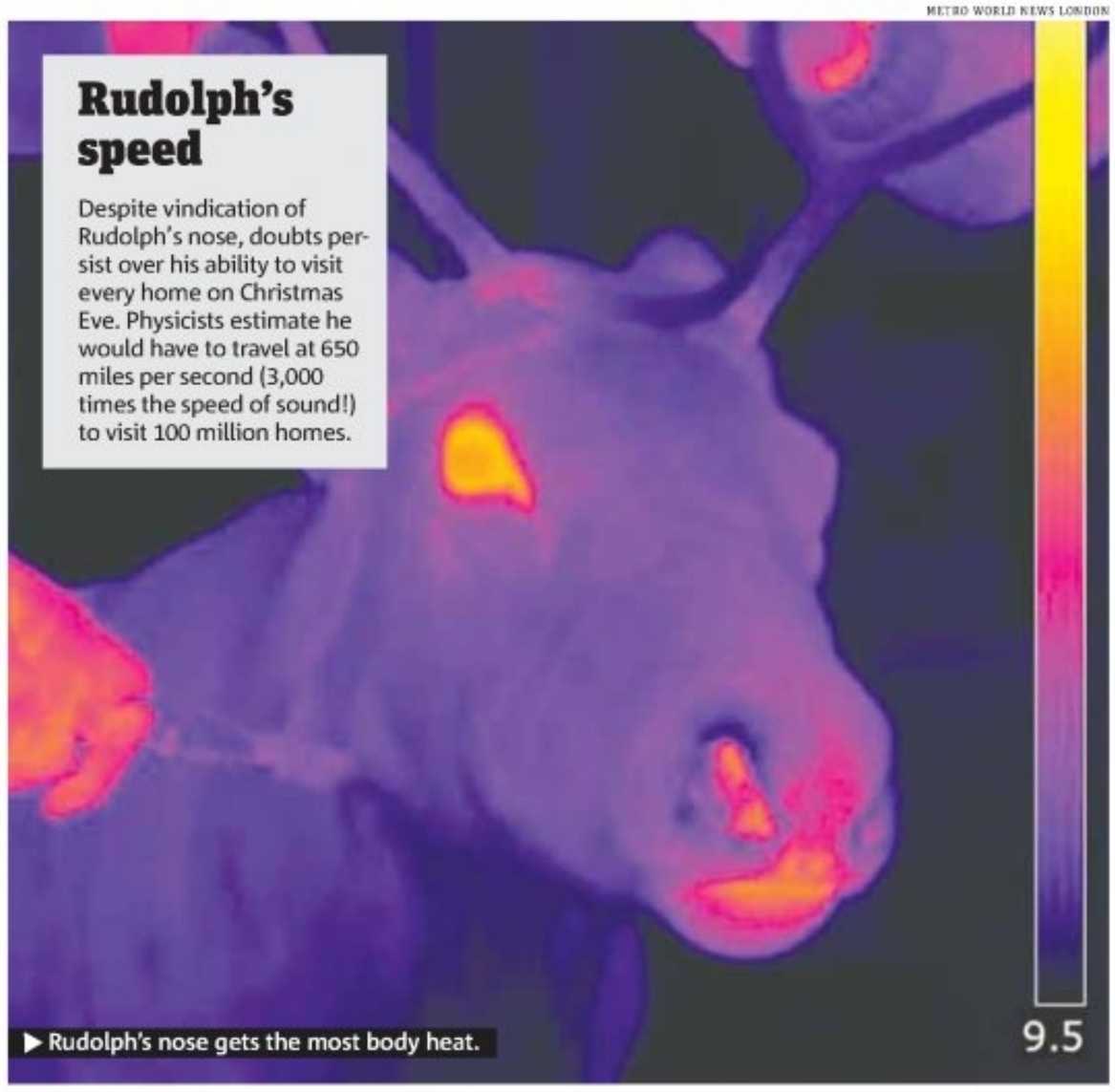

▶ Rudolph's nose gets the most body heat.

Rudolph's speed

Despite vindication of Rudolph's nose, doubts persist over his ability to visit every home on Christmas Eve. Physicists estimate he would have to travel at 650 miles per second (3,000 times the speed of sound!) to visit 100 million homes.

Scam alert: Watch out for Sandy Hook charity fraud

Even as horror struck Dec. 14 at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., fraud artists were on the prowl, presumably rubbing their hands in glee over the chance to profit financially from arguably the worst school-related tragedy in U.S. history.

But even 20 children dying at the hands of a psychopath won't stop someone who lives by the adage "never let a good opportunity go to waste," no matter how sick and twisted the individual.

Unfortunately, dealing with fraudsters looking to make a quick buck on Sandy Hook-related charities may be one more issue to deal with as the fallout from the tragedy unfolds.

That's why the Santa Monica, Calif.,-based Consumer Fraud Center is warning Americans to do their homework before donating money to charities linked to Sandy Hook.

"One of the most despicable after-effects of these national tragedies is the attempt to profit off of them by cybercriminals who send out fake solicitations for donations and aid," explains James Lee, executive director of the Consumer Fraud Center.

JOHN MOORE/GETTY IMAGES

▶ Morning traffic passes a streetside memorial.

Quoted

"One of the most despicable after-effects of these national tragedies is the attempt to profit off of them by cybercriminals who send out fake solicitations for donations and aid." LEE

"We saw several of these scams pop up after 9/11 and criminals have gotten more brazen with emails, phishing scams and fake websites. We urge consumers to double-check with news sources and law enforcement to make sure their donations are going to the right groups."

Lee says consumer fraud criminals thrive in a charitable environment where two key themes are in play, emotion and confusion. **MAINSTREET.COM**

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Jeep attempts to go global — again

The 62-year-old Jeep brand is poised to get a sweeping multi-billion-dollar overhaul that will expand the product range, boost its overseas presence and knit the fortunes of Jeep and U.S. parent Chrysler even more closely with those of Italy's Fiat.

Fiat, which took management control of Chrysler after the U.S. automaker's 2009 bankruptcy, plans to broaden the Jeep stable from four to at least six nameplates by 2016, Reuters has learned.

Three of those future Jeeps will be built on Fiat platforms, according to two industry sources familiar with Chrysler's and Fiat's future product programs, and several will share their underpinnings with companion models from Fiat and its premium European brands, Alfa Romeo and Maserati.

Fiat CEO Sergio Marchionne is masterminding the four-year retooling that is intended to establish Jeep as one of the Italian automaker's core global brands.

GETTY IMAGES

▶ A model poses beside the new Jeep Wrangler 10th anniversary Rubicon edition displayed on media preview day at the Los Angeles Auto Show on Nov. 28, 2012 in Los Angeles, Calif.

Quoted

"Jeep probably has the strongest global reputation of any brand inside the company — but it's never really been developed."
DAVID COLE, AUTOHARVEST

It is far and away the most ambitious effort to elevate the Jeep brand, which traces its roots to the iconic World War Two military vehicle and has had multiple owners, including French automaker Renault SA and German automaker Daimler AG.

Marchionne has been pushing for greater integration of the Fiat and Chrysler product ranges, while singling out Jeep for special attention and heavy investment.

The renewed focus on Jeep is paying off. U.S. sales through November are up nearly 16 percent, and Chrysler says the brand expects to beat its previous global sales record of 675,000 vehicles in 1999.

To facilitate Jeep's global growth, Marchionne has decreed that virtually every future Jeep, except for the long-running Wrangler, will share its major underbody components with one or more Fiat group brands.

With the new baby Jeep — it may be called Scamp — anchoring the low end of the range and the new Grand Wagoneer at the high end, the brand also is preparing to replace its slow-selling compacts, the Compass and the Patriot, with a single model in 2014, the sources said.

This model, like the Liberty replacement, will be built on a Fiat platform and assembled in the United States. And, as with virtually all future Jeeps, it is intended to be exported around the world. **REUTERS**

Keeping the Jeep in Jeep

Analysts caution that Chrysler and Fiat need to be careful not to stray too far from the qualities that have been integral to Jeep's personality.

"Jeep is one of the few American brands with virtually no baggage," says analyst Rebecca Lindland. "It is a charismatic brand with global appeal."

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Metro Magic drive a huge success thanks to readers

You came through for children throughout Greater Boston Toys for Tots, Heading Home distribute toys to needy families this holiday season

NICOLAUS CZARNECKI/METRO

Josia DuBose, 4, is surrounded by Metro Magic toys.

They ranged in age from newborns to teenagers, but no matter the age, the look of excitement on their faces was the same as they were handed a brand new toy purchased by Metro readers.

With your generosity through the Metro Magic toy drive, Metro supplied hundreds of toys and games to Toys for Tots and Heading Home this holiday season.

Throughout the month of December, Metro's offices received daily shipments from Toys R Us, that quickly began to overtake our storage area.

Whether it was dolls or trucks, games or electronics, sporting equipment or art supplies, each day brought a new surprise that we knew would put smiles on so many children's faces this year.

Janiya DuBose, 2, of Boston, loves her new doll given to her by Metro Magic.

Terrentz Watt, 3, plays with toys donated by Metro Magic.

It all culminated as children in need across Greater Boston were matched with their gift, and their faces beamed as they realized that, despite their family's struggle, they were not overlooked this year.

"The holiday season is an exciting time for many families, but it is also a particularly challenging time for homeless families in Greater Boston that do not have the resources to fulfill their children's holiday wishes," said Tom Lorello, Heading Home's executive director. "Metro newspaper's toy and gift drive will allow Heading Home to fulfill the holiday wishes of the homeless families we serve. Heading Home is grateful to the many Metro newspaper readers and supporters who made thoughtful donations to this toy drive."

Last year, Heading Home was able to provide meaningful gifts to 712 clients, and not a single request was denied. This year, with the help of Metro Magic, the organization was on track to do the same.

Since beginning the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots Program in 1947, Marines have distributed more than 452 million toys to more than 209 million needy children nationwide, making the organization the unchallenged leader in looking after less fortunate children at Christmas. This year, thanks to Metro Magic, will be no different. METRO

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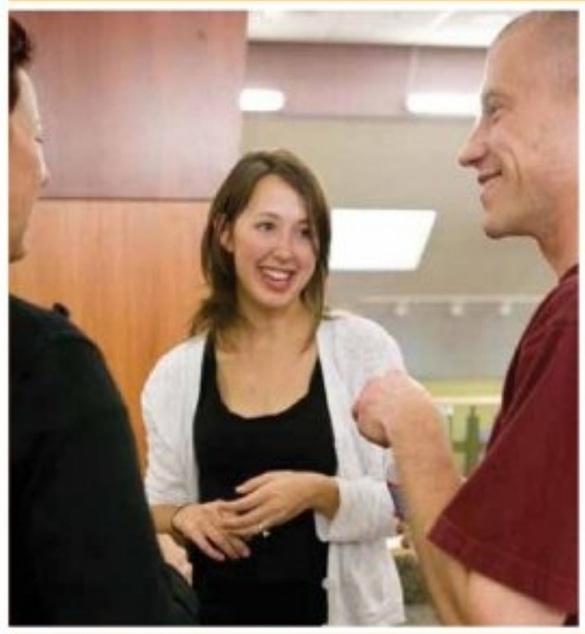

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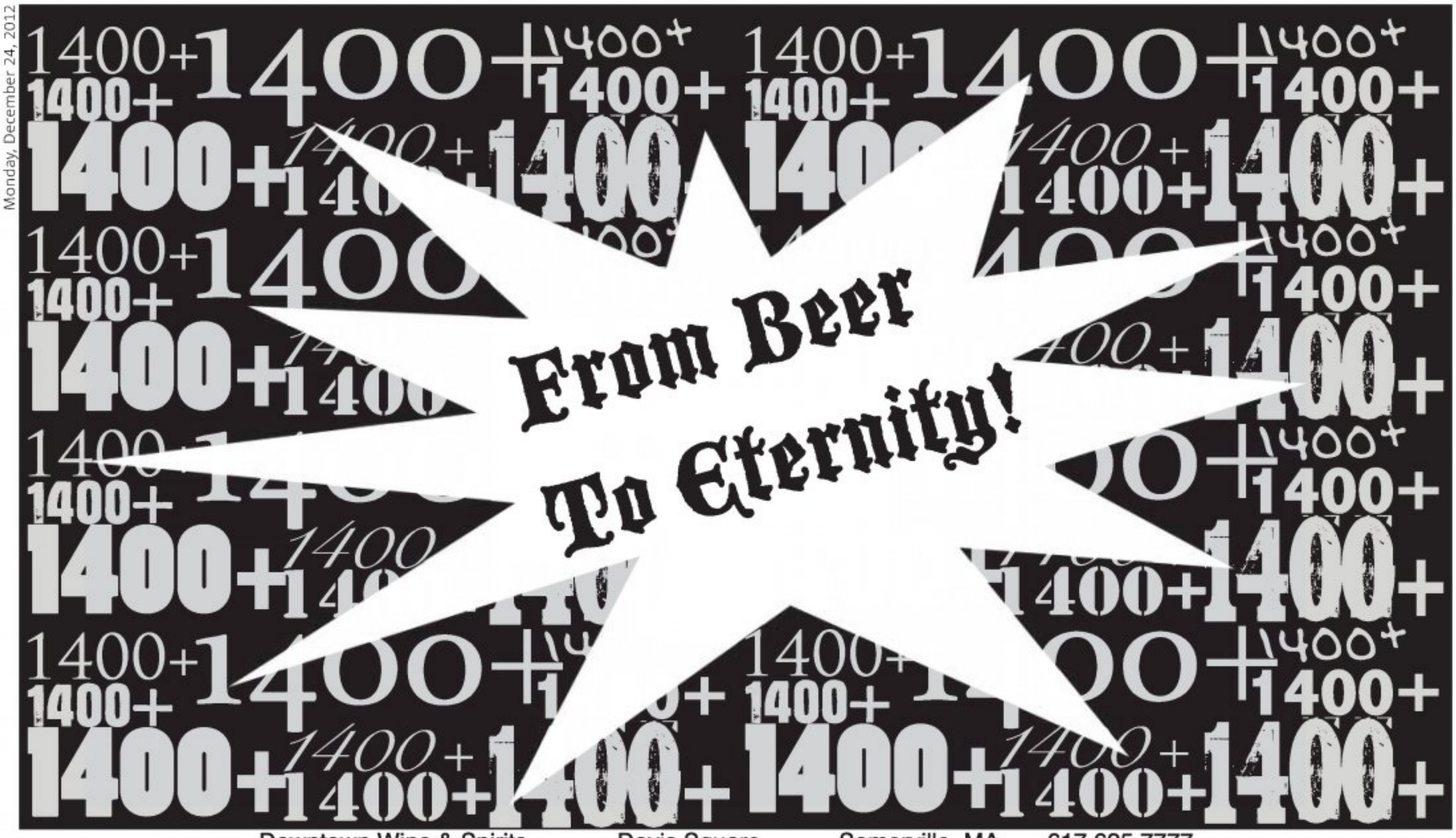

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myyear in review

TOP 5 POP CULTURE MOMENTS OF 2012

From 'Hey, sexy lady!' to saying goodbye to an icon, it's been quite a year for entertainment junkies Metro looks back on the big moments

ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Pop icon Whitney Houston was only 48-years-old when she died on Feb. 11.

Metro votes

1. Whitney Houston dies.
2. Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes divorce.
3. Kristen Stewart cheats on Robert Pattinson.
4. PSY takes over the world with "Gangnam Style."
5. The royals are having a baby.

"**Whitney Houston**'s death in February was a tragic event that symbolically set the tone for a year where the old guard in soul and R&B music gave way to a younger generation, as hip-hop kids like **Frank Ocean**, **The Weeknd** and **Miguel** basically reinvented the genre in 2012." **PAT HEALY**

"I remember going to a party and it's all anyone could talk about. I mean, we all knew she wasn't doing well, but I guess we didn't realize the extent of her fall from grace until it was too late." **DOROTHY ROBINSON**

"Our '**Kristen**, How Could You?' cover is blown-up and hanging on the wall next to my desk. Every day I ask myself the same thing." **MEREDITH ENGEL**

"At the risk of giving this any more ink: **Robert Pattinson**'s hair at least deserves to be cheated on in a proper hotel room." **MONICA WEYMOUTH**

"I can't believe the Stewart/Pattinson break up made the list but 'Fifty Shades' didn't. That's bonkers. But maybe it's because we are all still in shock that such badly written erotica could take off like it did." **DR**

"I just wanted to say that I think my 2012 approach to the **Kardashian** family has really worked this year. I vowed at the onset of 2012 to not speak the Kardashian name aloud. And look at how you're not seeing them on quite as many magazine covers in the check-out line. They're not even on this list! It's the power of the cosmic unconscious, people! Yes, the one that they call **Kim** is doing whatever she can to keep her flicker of fame alight, hiring **Kanye West** to pretend like he's into her, but in 2013, if we all agree not to speak the name of that family, I think we can finally make them go away forever." **PH**

"I never thought I'd be someone who thinks of themselves as a 'Royal Fan' but I really dig **Kate and William** and I'm excited for them." **DR**

"Agreed! Although I'm probably more on Team **Harry**. How much do you want that guy's life?" **MW**

Kristen Stewart issued a public apology to boyfriend Robert Pattinson when she was caught cheating this summer.

Quoted

"When my mother asked me what K-Pop was, I knew this thing was bigger than all of us. Parents are the best barometer."

HEIDI PATALANO, ON "GANGNAM STYLE"

Editor's picks

Goodbye TomKat

The Word columnist Dorothy Robinson's Top 5

1. **1.** Whitney's death
2. **2.** "Fifty Shades" phenomenon
3. **3.** "Gangnam Style"
4. **4.** "Twilight" breakup
5. **5.** Katie and Tom divorce

I hate to be so morbid that Whitney's death would be the biggest event of the year but it was just so shocking. Coming in at No. 2, for me, is the "Fifty Shades" book publishing phenomenon. It's not too often that a book comes along that every single woman — from your housekeeper to your grandmother — has read. Unfortunately, this was that book. It was neat to see "Gangnam" overtaking "The Macarena" as the biggest dance craze of the century, and it was also neat to see (in pictures) Kristen Stewart's car-seat dalliance. Thank you, paparazzi. Finally, Tom and Katie's divorce putters in at No. 5. Their split was no surprise there, but big enough for a mention.

Year end

Metro on the year in entertainment

At the end of every year, Metro's entertainment reporters reflect on their Top 5 moments in pop culture, films, albums/singles and TV shows. The lists have been compiled and tallied to create Metro's overall Top 5 picks of 2012, with the expected heavy-hitters and some surprises making the cut. In the following pages, our writers explain — and argue about — our choices. Did your favorites make the list? Let us know at letters@metro.us.

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myyear in review

TOP 5 IN MUSIC OF 2012

A few artists we greeted with excitement by saying, 'Hey, I just met you!' And many of us discovered that 'Somebody That I Used to Know' was not by somebody that we used to know

▶ Frank Ocean made many best-of lists this year, and he is the reason that 2012 may be remembered as the year that hip-hop souled out.

GETTY IMAGES

Metro votes

1. Frank Ocean, "channel ORANGE"
2. TIE: Father John Misty, "Fear Fun"; PSY, "Gangnam Style"*
3. Carly Rae Jepsen, "Call Me Maybe"
4. Gotye, "Somebody That I Used to Know"
5. TIE: Rihanna, "Diamonds"; Ke$ha, "Warrior"

**This list includes albums + singles.*

▶ We didn't have to cut him off — and we didn't! Gotye made our list!

NATASHA PISCOTT

Quoted

"Somebody That I Used to Know" stays on the list because it made me think there was this really great Police song from the '80s recently discovered and newly released. I think I just proved your old fogeys theory."
AMBER RAY

▶ "I'll start by criticizing myself (and roping you all in with it, so it might touch a nerve). How did we all leave 'We Are Young' by **Fun.** off this list? Is it because we're all too old to sing that song out loud, because we know it's just not true? It can't be! We all love movies about teenagers (see page 16). Is it the annoying way that they punctuate their name? Or is that opening of the song just too schlocky to make it all worth the amazing chorus? Also, here's where I'm a little bit of a jerk: That **Gotye** song officially started getting airplay last year."
PAT HEALY, MUSIC EDITOR

▶ "For me, the problem with Fun. is 'My friends are in the bathroom, getting higher than the Empire State.' This line ruined friends, getting high and New York for me. FOR SHAME, Fun.!" **MONICA WEYMOUTH**

▶ "Maybe this supports the argument that I'm already an old fogey, but I had to look up the **Rihanna** and **Ke$ha** songs because I hadn't heard them before. Ke$ha is the first to inspire me to call something 'devil music' in an unflattering way." **HEIDI PATALANO**

▶ "Heidi, you are killing me! Tell me that when 'TiK ToK' comes on, you don't feel like you run the world. Tell me!" **MW**

▶ "I may agree with Ke$ha's choice of toothpaste, but it all stops there." **HP**

▶ "Another bit of food for thought: Would **'Gangnam Style'** make the list if there weren't a video? People probably posed the same question about **Duran Duran** in 1982, and it's strange how this bit of devil's advocacy is still relevant in 2012. But seriously, in an age where music videos aren't shown on TV anymore, it is interesting that a video made such a huge cultural and musical splash." **PH**

▶ Carly Rae Jepsen said "Call Me Maybe." We did!

GETTY IMAGES

▶ "I think it would have — hell, I still haven't even seen the 'Gangnam Style' video, but I somehow know the dance. I personally enjoyed **Britney** trying her hand at it while appearing on 'Ellen.'"
MEREDITH ENGEL

▶ "I think a prerequisite for Best Song of the Year means we can sing along with it. Oh man, I'm such a xenophobe."
DOROTHY ROBINSON

▶ "'Heeeeeey sexy lady!' — count it!" **MW**

▶ "What about **Kanye** this year? Did anybody vote for **'Cruel Summer'**"? **PH**

▶ "I say this every single year, and I hate change so I'll say it again: I have never heard anything by Kanye West that I didn't want to turn off immediately. Who's old and grumpy? This girl — this girl right here." **MW**

▶ "Oh man, Monica, give **'Mercy'** a chance! There's so much going on in this track. I love how it flawlessly switches between winding dancehall to some gritty Southern rap all while maintaining a cool, dark undertone and then suddenly taking a left turn to an electronic dance party. Yup, you have to bring ALL your moves to the floor. Adding to the awesomeness is the all-black ninja-Bedouin looks everyone sports in the stylized video. It's totally one of those fashion moments I can see being referenced years from now." **TINA CHADHA**

▶ "Tina, I appreciate you thinking that I'm anywhere near this cool." **MW**

▶ "I'm really proud of our list — I think it's a great compilation of the best of what was playing on most people's iPhones this year. But for me, 2012 was the year of Innovative Leisure. The small L.A.-based label put out fantastic new albums by rhythm and blues throwback **Nick Waterhouse** and breezy psych rockers the **Allah-Las**. Both became fixtures on the beachy, blissed-out soundtrack to my summer (which, regrettably, lacked the actual SoCal sand and water)." **AR**

Editor's pick

Father John Misty

Music editor Pat Healy's Top 5

1. Father John Misty, "Fear Fun"
2. Michael Kiwanuka, "Home Again"
3. Big Boi, "Vicious Lies and Dangerous Rumors"
4. Frank Ocean, "channel ORANGE"
5. TIE: Bruce Springsteen, "Wrecking Ball" & The Walkmen, "Heaven"

Look at the top lists of any major publication and there are few similarities. I, for one, am surprised more outlets aren't praising the stellar songcraft of **Father John Misty** and **Michael Kiwanuka**. Neither are reinventing the wheel. In fact, both are rooted in sounds of the '60s and '70s. But as for my next two entries, **Big Boi** and **Frank Ocean**, both are doing great things to push their genres forward. Big Boi took a brave approach on his most recent album, which also didn't make many other lists (presumably due to its December release date). Almost every track is a collaboration, with either **Phantogram** or **Little Dragon**. The results are completely original. Frank Ocean's results are completely original too. I said this in discussing the symbolism of **Whitney**'s death, but it really is like he is on the forefront of bringing a much needed update to R&B. The new school, which includes **Miguel** and **The Weeknd**, never knew a world where hip-hop didn't exist and that's formed their worldviews in such a unique way. Fifth place? Well, I guess those are kinda loyalty picks.

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myyear in review

TOP 5 FILMS OF 2012

Summer release 'Moonrise Kingdom' tops our staff list of the best movies that came out this year

Metro votes

1. "Moonrise Kingdom"
2. "Argo"
3. "The Hunger Games"
4. "Silver Linings Playbook"
5. Tie: "The Avengers" and "21 Jump Street"

▶ "I'd like to qualify **'Moonrise Kingdom'**: It's on my list mostly — maybe only — because Bill Murray spends most of it in a bathrobe, drinking wine from the bottle." **MONICA WEYMOUTH**

▶ "And I would like to qualify **'Argo'** for Ben Affleck's sexy '70s shag haircut. He reminded me of Ramona and Beezus." **HEIDI PATALANO**

FOCUS FEATURES

▶ Kara Hayward and Jared Gilman, as Suzy and Sam, respectively, captured the hearts of the Metro entertainment reporters.

▶ "I saw **'The Hunger Games'** and then went into labor two hours later. Coincidence? Probably. But still, I'm very impressed the filmmakers tried (and mostly succeeded) to make an artful blockbuster from the YA book series unlike the cinematic candy that is **'Twilight.'**" **DOROTHY ROBINSON**

▶ "Is it weird that half of these picks are about teenagers? Don't take my question as criticism though; one of the movies that I picked — that nobody else probably even thought of — was **'Perks of Being a Wallflower,'** which may be the teen angst-iest of them all. Anyway, are we as a group of individuals regressing, or have years of youth marketing finally caught on and started working on us?" **PAT HEALY**

▶ "I'm wearing Uggs and Justin Bieber's hair mist. I fear this list makes perfect sense to me." **MW**

▶ "Well, OK we all just wanted some fun this year. Plus, I think that the more serious-minded films that came out this year just seemed sort of dour. In recent years there have been some offerings that just seemed much cooler than **'Lincoln'** and **'Zero Dark Thirty.'** Those movies don't offer enough to tempt me out to the theater if I can catch **'Magic Mike'** on Netflix at home." **HP**

▶ "**'Skyfall'**? Anyone? Am I the only one who thought this was up there with **'Casino Royale'** in terms of Bond films (and opportunities to drool at Daniel Craig)? And speaking of drooling, how did **'Magic Mike'** not make this list?" **MEREDITH ENGEL**

▶ "Easy: Banana hammocks are just WRONG." **AMBER RAY**

▶ "Channing Tatum's abs for the Oscar!" **MW**

Editor's picks

Film critic Heidi Patalano's Top 5

1. "Les Miserables"
2. "Argo"
3. "Moonrise Kingdom"
4. "Seven Psychopaths"
5. "Smashed"

"When it comes to **'Les Miserables'** you can believe the hype. Getting to see live performances of that music up-close was an unusually emotional experience. Though I have had nothing to do with his career, I feel proud of Ben Affleck for establishing himself as solid director with **'Argo.'** Wes Anderson never disappoints me, though many would say otherwise. I hope that putting **'Seven Psychopaths'** and **'Smashed'** on this list will get more people to check out these overlooked gems."

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▶ Amy Poehler stars as Leslie Knope on "Parks and Recreation."

TOP 5 TV SHOWS OF 2012

Editor's picks

TV Editor Amber Ray's Top 5

- 1. "Masterpiece: Sherlock"
- 2. "Louie"
- 3. "Parks and Recreation"
- 4. "Breaking Bad"
- 5. "Homeland"

Benedict Cumberbatch

Sherlock Holmes has been done dozens of times before. And yet the detective, in Benedict Cumberbatch's guise, becomes this incredibly exotic, infuriatingly distant being to whom we're nonetheless drawn because of his genius and unyielding confidence. Well, and his impeccably tailored sense of style.

Or maybe I'm just a sucker for tortured mad men with gunmetal eyes.

Then there is the writing on "Sherlock." Sherlock's back-and-forth with Irene Adler (Lara Pulver) in "A Scandal in Belgravia" created some of the best sexual tension on TV this year — quite a feat when we're talking about a celibate detective. And the ending of "The Reichenbach Fall" and Sherlock's showdown with Moriarty (Andrew Scott) was so, so good, I can't believe we might have to wait until 2014 to see the resolution of the Season 2 cliffhanger.

Metro's Top 5

- 1. "The Mindy Project"
- 2. "Parks and Recreation"
- 3. "The Walking Dead"
- 4. "Masterpiece: Sherlock"
- 5. "Louie"

▶ "OK, the 'Mindy' show is amazing — not because there's finally a cool Indian chick on TV, which BTW, is major — but because it appeals to real women, the ones who perhaps didn't get asked to prom but grew up to be badass, hysterical, Celine-bag swinging hotshots. I don't mind that she flaunts it." **TINA CHADHA**

▶ Mindy Kaling stars in "The Mindy Project."

▶ "I want to steal Mindy's life and/or be her permanent brunch date. She's like a Zooey Deschanel that I don't want to smother a little bit." **MONICA WEYMOUTH**

▶ "I really like 'The Mindy Project' — it's good — but there's no way it's the best show on TV. That would be 'Sherlock' and 'Breaking Bad.' I would kill a man to work on 'Sherlock.' I know people say that as hyperbole but I really, really mean it (sorry, random dude). It's as close to genius as TV gets these days." **DOROTHY ROBINSON**

▶ "I want to state for the record that against all of my best instincts I welcome the world knowing and loving a man with the so-British-it's-silly-on-an-almost-Monty-Python-level name of Benedict Cumberbatch!" **PAT HEALY**

▶ "Anyone else have a weird crush on Louis CK? Just me? I can't help it: He hates us all so good." **MW**

▶ "I've caught the occasional 'Louie' episode and somehow they've all left me wondering: '... the f— was that?' in a good way." **MEREDITH ENGEL**

▶ "Angry dudes, obviously, make the best TV — from a divorced doc ("Mindy") to a zombie-fighting lawman ("The Walking Dead") to an anti-government government employee ("Parks and Rec," though give Ron Swanson his sax and all is right with the world.)" **AMBER RAY**

▶ "If I'm being honest, I mostly watch "The Walking Dead" because I know — I know — that Andrew Lincoln will drop the zombie-slaying act any day now and declare his undying love for Keira Knightley with cue cards. Wait for it." **MW**

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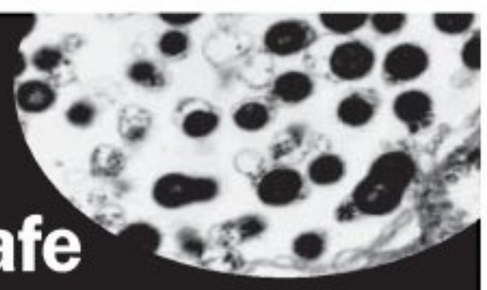
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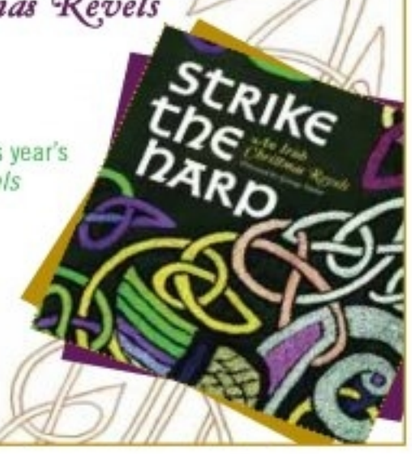
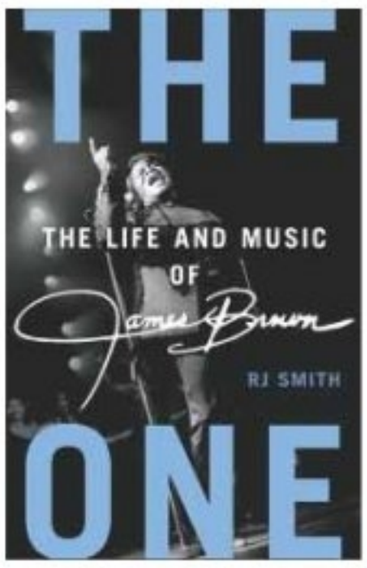

REVELS.

Our favorite authors on their best reads of 2012

Forget the critics — the best book recommendations come from people who write them
So we asked the authors of the books we enjoyed this year for their top picks

Every year we ask the authors we enjoyed covering in Metro for their top reads of the past 365 days. Here is this year's best of the best. METRO

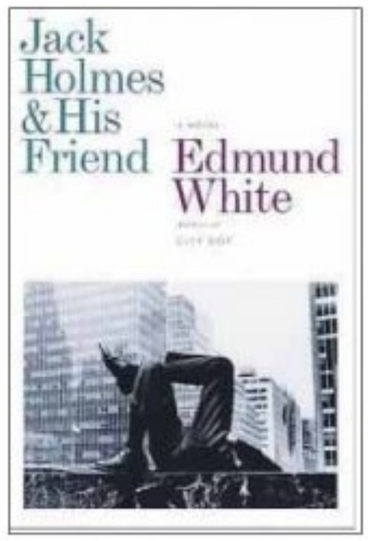


Alan Light: R.J. Smith's "The One: The Life and Music of James Brown"
"This was an ambitious, comprehensive and long-overdue biography of a towering figure in music across the globe."

— Alan Light is the author of "The Holy or the Broken: Leonard Cohen, Jeff Buckley, and the Unlikely Ascent of 'Hallelujah.'"

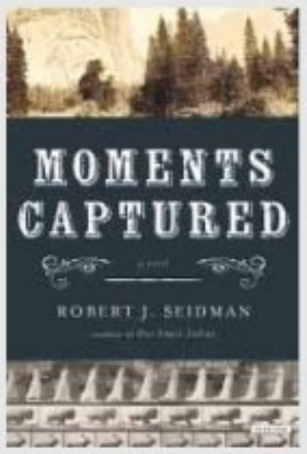
Edmund White: John Irving's "In One Person"
"This is a gripping, completely readable tale fashioned by a straight man's effort to imagine himself into several marginal sexualities. I also loved a thriller 'In Search of Klingsor' by Jorge Volpi, about a young physicist in 1945 rounding up Hitler's top nuclear scientists. During the blackout due to Sandy I read Willa Cather's 'Song of the Lark' by flashlight."

— Edmund White is the author of "Jack Holmes and His Friend."



John Irving: Edmund White's "Jack Holmes and His Friend"
"What I admire most about 'Jack Holmes and His Friend' is the seamlessness of the shifts in point of view and narrative voice. It is a novel about the friendship between a gay man and his straight friend, and it is not only written from each of their points of view; it is written in both the third person and the first person. I find that very hard to do, but Edmund makes it look easy."

— John Irving is the author of "In One Person."



Stephen Davis: Robert J. Seidman's "Moments Captured"
"It's a novel about Eadweard Muybridge. This is the guy who invented the moving image. He completely changed the way that humanity sees itself. This novel is an evocation of a very pivotal time in the history of the moving image, between two-dimensional still images and images that moved."

— Stephen Davis is the author of "More Room in a Broken Heart: The True Adventures of Carly Simon."

Chris Cleave: Vaddey Ratner's "In the Shadow of the Banyan"; Kevin Powers' "The Yellow Birds"
"2012 has been a strikingly good year for debut fiction. If I am to single out two novels from this vintage crop, I would choose Vaddey Ratner's 'In the Shadow of the Banyan' — a beautiful and heart-rending take on the Cambodian genocide — and Kevin Powers' 'The Yellow Birds,' chronicling one soldier's harrowing experience of war in Iraq. Both writers draw deeply on their own experience, bringing a hard-won wisdom to which their literary gift is equal. This is the novel at its best, taking us far beyond the ordinary for a few hours and leaving us spooked and exhilarated."

— Chris Cleave is the author of "Gold."

Peter Ames Carlin: Jim Lynch's "Truth Like the Sun"
"Set in the Seattles of 1962 and 2001, Lynch's novel tracks his characters through decades of civic idealism, corruption, death and rebirth. His darkly hilarious portrait of modern journalism is alone worth the price of admission."

— Peter Ames Carlin is the author of the Bruce Springsteen biography, "Bruce."

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myentertainment

The fanstastic Mr. Foxx

The star of Quentin Tarantino's latest epic, 'Django Unchained,' explains why so many online critics are decrying the controversial film

THE WEINSTEIN COMPANY

Q&A

Should a white man direct a movie about slavery?

I think that's amateur stuff. This is Quentin Tarantino. If it was anybody else, you'd have worried, but it's Quentin Tarantino. Here's what you're saying in that statement: You're saying that that director is not capable. And what if — just what if — Quentin Tarantino is just better than everyone else? He's just better at telling these stories than everybody else would, so you just have to factor that in because you cheapen what he is as an artist if you say that he can't tell this story, that story. ... I ran into Spike Lee and he said, 'I'm not gonna say nothing bad about the movie.' And you know Spike Lee — that's his thing. And for Spike Lee to say that, I think he understands the genius of Quentin.

HEIDI PATALANO
heidi.patalano@metro.us

The Internet is stupid, according to Jamie Foxx. When asked about criticism regarding his new film, Quentin Tarantino's "Django Unchained," the star is adamant about the fact that online naysayers — who have been critical of the film's frequent use of the N-word by both black and white characters — are irrelevant. As long as Oprah approves, the actor says, everything's basically OK.

"When Oprah saw it, we were like —" Foxx gives a terrified stare. "[Oprah] was like, 'I loved it. It was hard to watch in some spots. I cannot believe I was laughing at some of these things because you know me, I'm a super-black woman.' I'm paraphrasing," Foxx adds.

The film walks a fine line between accuracy and exploitation. Foxx — who portrays a freed slave determined to rescue his wife from a Southern plantation by becoming a bounty hunter — and his colleagues on the film were acutely aware of that border. Even director Tarantino found himself susceptible to the online criticism about the film.

"A couple friends of mine, entertainers, read so much of it until they shut down," Foxx says. "Even Quentin calls me, says, 'Man.' I'm like, 'What? Who gives a f—. They're on the Internet.' The Internet to me is nothing."

And back to that N-word controversy

"I'm from Texas, so being in the South, there's a racial component [to the word]," Foxx says. "And I love the South. There's no other place I'd rather be from, but there are racial components in the South — [like] me being called n—r as a kid. So when I read the script, I didn't knee-jerk to the word n—r like someone from New York or L.A. would knee-jerk, because that was something that I experienced."

Foxx has an explanation for all the ire, for all that anger directed toward his movie and on the Internet in general.

"What it comes down to is what I call subliminal jealousy," he says. "A lot of people aren't artists. A lot of people aren't special, so all they can do is stand on the outside and just say the loudest, craziest s— in the world. That's all it is."

But the film is receiving an equal amount of praise for its unflinchingly violent picture of life in the South just two years before the Civil War. While the brutality is graphic, in a marked contrast, there are plenty of hilarious moments. It's the kind of juxtaposition that is the hallmark of a Tarantino film.

"[The roles Kerry Washington and I play] were more the grounded characters and then all of these funny things happen around them, which I think is so necessary, because it gave people some relief," Foxx says. "I know a lot of black folks breathed a little easier. I mean, it's still tough, but there were colorful moments that made it an entertaining ride as opposed to a gut-wrenching thing that was going to hold you down for two hours and 44 minutes. That's what people have been [saying] — 'Wasn't it hilarious?' 'It was gut-wrenching.'"

Hathaway will have her way come Oscar time

Almost any critic who has seen Tom Hooper's big-screen adaptation of "Les Miserables" will tell you that Anne Hathaway has it in the bag — an Oscar, that is. Having already scored a Golden Globe nod for her portrayal of Fantine — a young factory worker who is forced into prostitution in order to support her daughter — Hathaway is poised to win big during awards season.

And the recognition is well-earned. Hathaway spent months practicing crying while singing. Because each of the actors' singing performances were recorded live on set, it was a particular trick to hold a note while sobbing. But learning the realities of the kind of sexual slavery that her character endures gave Hathaway the weight and depth she needed to pull it off.

"In my case, there's no way that I could relate to what my character was going through. I have a very successful, happy life," she says. "What I did was I tried to get inside the reality of her story as it exists in our world. ... So every day that I was her I just thought, this isn't an invention, this isn't me

▶ Anne Hathaway stars as Fantine in "Les Miserables," opening Christmas Day.

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

acting, this is me honoring that this pain lives in this world."

To take it a step further, Hathaway also volunteered to have her hair shorn off with a blade, live on-camera, for the scene in which her character sells her locks for money.

"I thought doing it for real might raise the stakes a bit for the character," she says. "I guess in the back of my mind I thought if it was a painful experience watching your hair cut, then watching your teeth get pulled — it'd be really painful. And then of course when she becomes a prostitute, I just thought [the audience] is going to be alongside her. And as an actor, it was great to be able to authentically communicate a physical transformation."

Co-star Hugh Jackman has another recollection of the hair-cutting scene: "I remember Annie saying, 'Now, by the way, if you end up cutting my scalp and there's blood, fantastic, let's go for it!' ... And I put up my hand and I said, "For the record, I would like make-up — thanks guys."

HEIDI PATALANO

Letters

letters@metro.us

You can't compare cars to firearms

RE: "ONE BAD APPLE DOESN'T MEAN THE REST ARE CRIMINALS" (METRO, DEC. 21-23) "Why not protest outside AAA because of drunken drivers and others that have no business behind the wheel of a vehicle?" asks letter writer Mike Priell complaining about people picking on the NRA and guns.

Here's why: The AAA does not oppose the testing and licensing of drivers, nor the registration of cars, nor does it try to weaken or prevent laws calling for penalties for speeding or driving under the influence. If they did, they might well be the target of protests. There are responsible gun owners who deserve a seat at the table in discussions on how we deal with gun violence. They're easy to recognize. They don't try to derail the discussion by asking stupid questions like that.

DANIEL M. KIMMEL, VIA E-MAIL

Mike Priell seems to miss the point. Imagine that in 200 years' time it is relatively easy to build, or purchase, one's own nuclear bomb. If it were legal to do so and Boston was blown up by a nuclear wielding idiot, I think that people would rightfully be upset by laws that permitted a citizen to obtain nuclear weapons. The response, that there are plenty of nuclear-wielding sane people, completely misses the point. Obviously an assault weapon is not a nuclear weapon, and so the issue becomes one of drawing the line. What sorts of weapons should private citizens be allowed to have, and what should the checks be on obtaining them? Many feel assault weapons are too easy to obtain, and that the cost-benefit analysis of allowing easy access tends very far to the cost side of the ledger.

JEREMY GWIAZDA, VIA E-MAIL

Keep those dollars circulating — in US

For well over a year, Democrats and Republican have been saying the United States cannot afford to continue its free-spending ways and the rich, middle-class and/or low-income citizens are going to have to suffer — but they cannot agree who should suffer more. They tell us we are approaching a "fiscal cliff" that could ruin the U.S. I understand the U.S. economy is in a tough situation and there will have to be some belt-tightening in the future. However, there appears to be a group excluded from this belt-tightening and suffering in the future and I don't know why. I have not heard a single politician suggest that since the USA does not have extra funds, then we should stop or significantly be reduce our foreign aid (military or otherwise). We distribute billions of U.S. dollars to countries all over the world, so why can't we use those "extra" funds to help the U.S. citizens?

DAN LEONARD, VIA E-MAIL

Founders' ideas only revolutionary at the time

RE: "FOUNDING FATHERS WANTED ARMED, RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS" (METRO, DEC. 20) The founding fathers wanted an armed citizenry? They also wanted slavery, and didn't want women to vote. We've moved on.

DAN HAUBER, VIA E-MAIL

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Keep them as brief as possible, preferably under 100 words.
Metro reserves the right to edit all letters.
Please include your name and contact information.

Horoscope

♑ Capricorn **Dec. 22-Jan. 19.** Even though it might not enhance your popularity, it's still best not to do things that go against your better judgment. Don't wrongly yield to pressure.

♒ Aquarius **Jan. 20-Feb. 19.** Strive for continuity of purpose, so that you finish whatever you begin. Letting loose ends linger could leave a long-lasting bad effect.

♓ Pisces **Feb. 20-March 20.** You might find yourself tempted to do something nasty to even an old score. If you do, you'll find out that spite does not make right.

♈ Aries **March 21-April 19.** Something you're planning has promising potential, but it will have to be nurtured every step of the way. The important thing is not to become impatient.

♉ Taurus **April 20-May 20.** Appearances are more important than usual, so if you want others to follow your lead, put on a happy face. To be a leader, you'll first have to behave like one.

♊ Gemini **May 21-June 20.** Your intuitive perception is likely to be an enormously valuable asset. Sometimes it pays to ignore your common sense and depend on your hunches to lead the way.

♋ Cancer **June 21-July 22.** When in a discussion with a friend, you shouldn't treat lightly anything that he or she takes seriously. If you do, your pal might stop coming to you for advice — and for friendship.

♌ Leo **July 23-Aug. 22.** You'll function quite well if you don't attempt to do too many things simultaneously. It would be better to do one thing at a time, seeing it through to its conclusion.

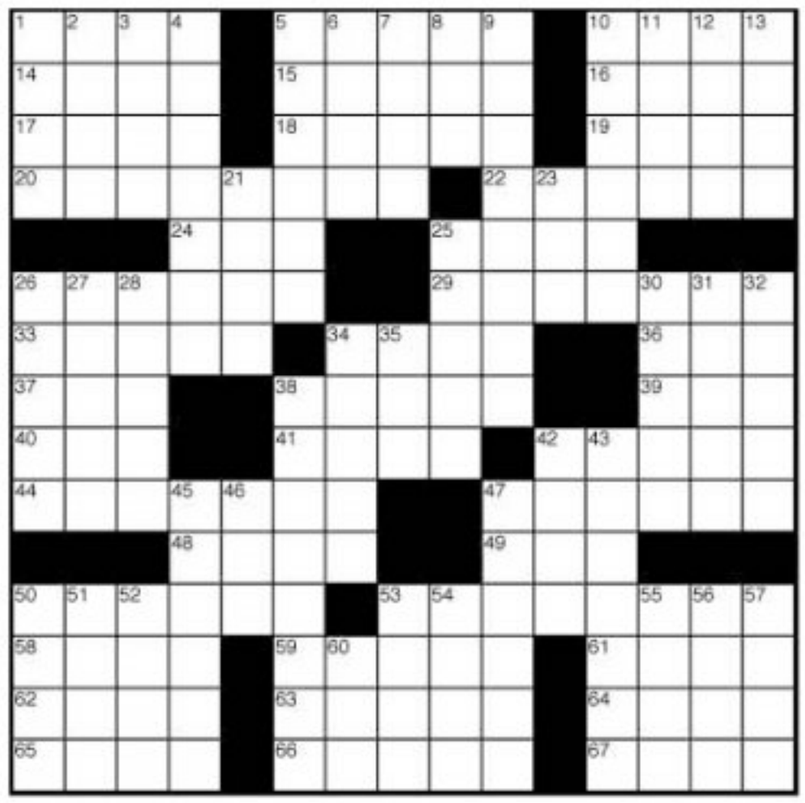
♍ Virgo **Aug. 23-Sept. 22.** Avoid trying to instruct another on how to do something you've never actually done yourself. If you turn out to be wrong, you could ruin some important plans.

♎ Libra **Sept. 23-Oct. 23.** Your researching, probing and detecting skills are especially keen. There is a good chance you will have already effectively used them in helping you select gifts for friends and family.

♏ Scorpio **Oct. 24-Nov. 22.** You don't have to be told that there are always two sides to a story, so don't think differently now. If you should rush to judgment, you could offend the wrong person.

♐ Sagittarius **Nov. 23-Dec. 21.** The possibilities for fulfilling your ambitious expectations look to be exceptionally good today, mostly because you'll do things in stages.

BERNICE BEDE OSOL



Across
1 Latch onto
5 Daybreaks
10 Beowulf's drink
14 Temple city of Japan
15 Word of parting
16 "Bus Stop" author
17 Consumes
18 Timbuktu's river
19 Dissolute fellow
20 Gift repository
22 Hidden
24 Catch cold
25 Ground up
26 Athens rival
29 Money-grubbing
33 Tibetan monks
34 Salad veggie
36 Icy remark?
37 Pass near Pikes Peak
38 Hurt at Pamplona
39 Dad's lad
40 Max opposite
41 The Y in YSL
42 Tableau
44 Model's concern
47 Rights a wrong
48 Approve
49 Scrooge's oath
50 Hush-hush
53 Orange/coconut dessert
58 Railroad siding
59 Hot topic
61 Ocean sound
62 Lois of "Lois & Clark"
63 Neat and smart
64 Livy's togs
65 Pit or stone
66 No-see-ums
67 Stuck-up person

Down
1 Wildebeests
2 Endure
3 Hydrox rival
4 Lash darkener
5 Kind of folder
6 Wednesday's god
7 Mrs. Peel portrayer
8 Social Register word
9 Made it
10 More muddy
11 Lab compound
12 Shivery feeling
13 Lockbox document
21 Hobby shop buys
23 Bambi's aunt
25 Phonies
26 Losing streak
27 Place for a grill
28 Revival shouts
30 Peer Gynt creator
31 Hag
32 Fish-eating eagles
34 Quail family
35 Suffix for "forfeit"
38 Turning
42 Bright object
43 Companions
45 Way beyond warm
46 Luau strings
47 Monasteries
50 Former JFK arrivals
51 Touche provoker
52 Salt or pickle
53 Whodunit terrier
54 Mongrel
55 In no time
56 "Othello" villain
57 Mighty steed
60 — Diego Chargers

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SUDOKU **LEVEL: EASY**

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SUDOKU **LEVEL: HARD**

Solution to yesterday's crossword

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B	A	K	E	D		T	Y	R	O	L		C	H	E
S	H	E	D			S	E	A	M	Y		T	E	D

How to play Sudoku: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

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New Year's resolutions

Steps to better business in 2013

For small business owners, the end of the year isn't a countdown to time off — it's a whirlwind of paperwork, payroll and forecasts. With careful organization and preparedness, though, entrepreneurs can feel confident in the close of 2012 and be ready for business in 2013.

Analyze 2012: Before beginning the new year, you need to look back at what happened in 2012. "Ask yourself, did your business have a successful year? What did it do well? What could it have done better? Where are the future opportunities that will grow your business?" suggests Bill McBean, author of "The Facts of Business Life." "Once answered, then it's up to you to define the leadership skills needed to move your business from where it is today to where you want it to be tomorrow."

Keep thorough records: The best way to answer all of McBean's questions is to be able to pour over extensive records of the year. "Don't underestimate the importance of good bookkeeping," says Brett Reizen, president of Entertainment Benefits Group. "The only way to truly know your bottom line is quality reporting. Make sure to not cut any corners — pay the extra money to hire a professional or a strong person to evaluate your accounting and reconcile your finances every month."

Know what's trending: "It's easy to say 'just charge the client' — but in order to charge your clients more, you have to be on the cutting edge of your industry's trends," explains Andrea Correale, owner of New York-based catering company Elegant Affairs. Pay attention to what's happening in your field and you should be able to predict what will be in high demand. "In order for any small business to be successful, there needs to be a market gap for the company to strive with what other companies cannot offer," she says. JULIA WEST

This season's temps have résumés, hopes to stay

As full-time jobs become harder and harder to come by, older, more experienced workers across America and Europe are hoping to turn seasonal gigs into long-term employment

Wielding a hand-held scanner in the cramped stockroom of a John Lewis department store in East London, artist Neil Maclennan sorts through boxes and explains why he'd like to keep working with the company after his temporary holiday contract expires at the end of December.

"I can't see art as my main source of income for a while," says Maclennan, a goateed 32-year-old from London's gritty Hackney neighborhood, who's temping as he tries to get his fledgling art business off the ground. "I'd like to stay on, maybe in the head office."

Across Europe and the U.S., thousands of temps will stock shelves and man the cash registers this year. With youth unemployment in Europe above 20 percent and at 15.6 percent in the U.S., today's temps aren't just bored teenagers looking for extra cash or an employee discount. They're now older, and more often angling for full-time work, like Maclennan.

"Before the downturn, unemployment was 5 percent and companies couldn't even fill permanent jobs, much less temp jobs."
CRAIG ROWLEY

That means retailers can get more qualified workers for less money, according to Craig Rowley, head of the global retail practice at workplace consultancy Hay Group. The trend also allows companies to audition employees before signing them to long-term contracts.

"Before the downturn, unemployment was 5 percent and companies couldn't even fill permanent jobs, much less temp jobs," Rowley says. "Now, companies can hire more than just stock keepers — they can hire people who like dealing with customers and who have some level of independence."

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▶ It's not just teenagers who are applying to seasonal retail jobs.

As full-time jobs dwindle, more than one-third of U.S. retailers surveyed by Hay Group said they are hiring more seasonal workers this year, up from just 10 percent who said so last year. In the U.K., more than two-thirds of retailers will boost staffing for the holiday season, up from 54 percent last year, according to the British Retail Consortium.

Last year Jess Moon, 18, temped at a John Lewis outlet in Reading, England, while in school and now has a permanent job. The last few shopping days before Christmas can be "nerve-wracking," she says. Her advice for this year's temps: "Be confident, energetic and enthusiastic, and you'll do fine." BLOOMBERG

The secrets behind a successful salesperson

It's the classic holiday face-off. On one side, you have the wary shopper, who is often "just browsing" and more and more likely to purchase only online. On the other, there's the salesperson, who is bent on persuading customers to buy in-store and to buy today — but doesn't want to scare them off by being too aggressive.

To give their side an edge, stores bring in retail psychologists. Salespeople learn to be consumer therapists, armed with the right attitude and phrases — along with just the right dose of empathy — to sell to you now, and sell you more.

Salespeople spend a lot of time rehearsing opening lines. "You can't close if you can't open," says Harry Friedman, founder of the Friedman Group, which he says is the largest of the retail training companies. When a salesperson does start a conversation, it should be about anything but business. For example: "What's the weather like outside?"

To the relief of many a shopper, a well-trained salesperson will not approach a customer right away, says Paco Underhill, founder of behavioral research company Envirosell. Unless a shopper is making the universal signal for "Where the heck is a salesperson when you need them?" — looking up, craning their necks — he or she should be left alone, at least initially. Don't attempt to make a sale "when a customer has resistance to you," says Friedman.

Notes from the Apple playbook

Empathy is used with gusto and finesse in Apple stores, if the Genius Training Student Workbook, an Apple manual uncovered by website Gizmodo, is an indication. (Apple didn't respond to requests for comment.) Geniuses are told which words to use — "feel" is encouraged — and which to avoid. Talking about a computer "crashing" is a no-no (it "stopped responding"). Geniuses "do not apologize for ... the technology." They say things like, "I'm sorry you're feeling frustrated."

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▶ The Apple "Geniuses" are coached on how to ask customers questions.

Once a potential customer has loosened up, Underhill advises asking the shopper to describe the person receiving the purchase. That leads shoppers on what he calls a psychological "journey:" Since we're now thinking specifically of our loved ones, we might buy better, and more expensive, gifts.

Stores urge staff to customize their openers, but they're not above basic profiling. They'll sort customers based on age, appearance and other factors. A common holiday profile is the shopper who looks out of place — a man in a lingerie shop, for example.

Robin Lent, of Paris consulting firm AC3, says luxury brands are on the lookout for holiday clientele "a little less sophisticated in their dress and manners." Millionaires and billionaires don't always look the part. Without training, high-end salespeople might ignore gift-givers willing to drop thousands of dollars just because they're wearing Crocs.
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BAD RABBITS

BAD RABBITS LOOKING FOR A GOOD TIME

▶ Bad Rabbits rock in the New Year on Monday night.

Boston band on party songs, working with kids, and streamlining their Eclectic Collective
Guitarist says they focus on R&B in the studio, but live, they just can't keep from rocking

Bad Rabbits know how to get a party started. The Boston-based quintet spent several years building a rep for a high-energy amalgam of rock, pop and soul. So, who better for a New Year's Eve blowout? And Bad Rabbits are pulling out all the stops for the final night of 2012.

"We're going to have a horn section and a back-up singer and maybe a couple of guests," says guitarist Salim Akram. "We also have a couple of kids from the Boys and Girls Club in Boston. We've been kind of mentoring them, so they're going to be getting up for a couple of songs."

Bad Rabbits, which also comprises Fredua Boakye (vocals), Sheel Dave (drums), Graham Masser (bass) and Santiago Araujo (guitar), spent most of 2012 prepping their debut, "American Love," which is due for release early next year. The record is the result of several years honing skills and streamlining a sound that culls from the five's diverse interests.

"Our influences range from Michael Jackson to Jimi Hendrix," says Akram. "We channel more of the rock stuff in our live performance and then more of the soul and R&B elements get translated to record."

LINDA LABAN
linda.laban@metro.us

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The Eclectic slide

Before switching names and stepping up their game, Bad Rabbits were known around town by the acutely descriptive moniker of The Eclectic Collective.

"It was basically a musical free for all," says Akram. "We'd be like, 'Let's put this reggae part in this song.' We just really didn't give a s— about good songwriting or keeping the sound cohesive. We just did what we felt like. At the end of the day, er, industry wise, it was hard to put that into a box."

In other words, a bit too eclectic of a collective. "We concentrated on better songwriting with Bad Rabbits. Our EP was very upbeat, very much a house party vibe. This new record has some of that, but some songs are deeper. We didn't want it to be straight party songs all the time."

Songza

Songza the year 2012

You're going to go to a bunch of parties where people are going to ask what your favorite song of the year was. Instead of blurting out "Gangnam Style" or "Call Me Maybe," we suggest you listen to the playlist at **www.metro.us/songza and www.songza.com/ listen/cool-new-music-best-of-2012-songza**. It's five-and-a-half hours featuring many critically acclaimed albums released in 2012. We're talking The XX, The Weeknd, alt-j, First Aid Kit and Father John Misty, who is pictured above for good measure to let you know we aren't the ONLY ones who loved his "Fear Fun" album (see page 14).

— Songza is a streaming platform that mines years of music history and today's music blogs for the best gems, so you don't have to. The company, which calls itself a music concierge service, offers expertly-curated playlists for free on the Web, iPhone and iPad.

Also onstage

The Roots

Wednesday, 8 p.m.
House of Blues
15 Lansdowne St., Boston
$37-$50, 800-745-3000
You'd think any sensible person with a few days off wouldn't work if they didn't have to, right? Well, The Roots aren't necessarily sensible, and we love them for it. They get a few nights off from taping with Jimmy Fallon and they come up to Boston to play a Boxing Day bash. Make sure to wish everybody a happy Boxing Day, by the way.

▶The Roots take flight.

Hoodie Allen
Wednesday, 7 p.m.
The Paradise
967 Comm. Ave., Boston
$18, 800-745-3000
www.livenation.com
This MC, an unapologetic former Google employee whose real name is Steven Markowitz, has no illusions of hip-hop "cred." Who else has the guts to reference Sufjan Stevens and Groupon in a rap? But hip-hop has always been about who you are, not who you pretend to be, and in that sense, Hoodie has got cred up the wazoo.

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BOSTON SPORTS IN 2012

No teams rode on the duck boats in 2012 Still, Boston sports was again at the forefront of the national scene A gymnast won our hearts while Pats, Celts came up a little short

Year in review

10. FARRELL RETURNS — A year after Terry Francona was fired, the Red Sox dipped back into the Tito-era with the hiring of former pitching coach Farrell. Boston gave away shortstop Mike Aviles to Toronto for compensation.

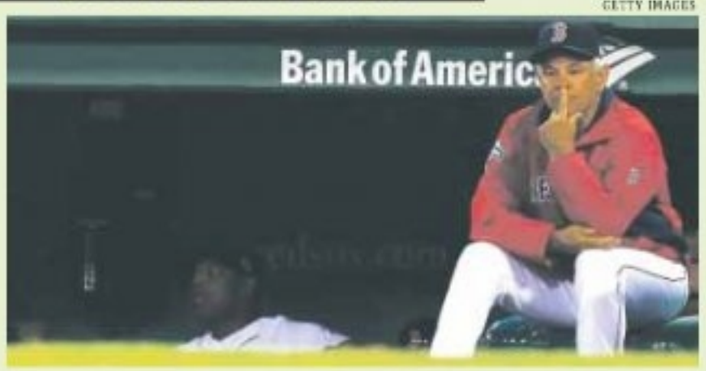
9. CUP DEFENSE ENDS — Metro's 2011 Year in Review featured Bruins, Bruins and more Bruins due to the team bringing home Lord Stanley's Cup. The image of Joel Ward burying the OT game-winner will be burned in the minds of B's fans for quite awhile.

8. RAY BOLTS TOWN — Ray Allen was always the third wheel in the Celtics' second "Big 3" era. He could have gone anywhere he wanted as a free agent, but by choosing the Heat, he immediately became "Hoops Enemy No. 1."

7. TIMMY GONE LOCO — Tim Thomas snubbed President Obama's White House invitation back in January and then decided to quit playing hockey altogether. Here's a hunch: this story is far from over.

6. THE BOBBY V ERROR

GETTY IMAGES



The Red Sox thought that Bobby Valentine wouldn't create a daily circus ... he created a daily circus. Beginning in April with his criticism of Kevin Youkilis, to the trading of Youkilis, to him embarrassing Will Middlebrooks in the dugout, to him threatening to punch a sports radio talk show host in the face, things were interesting on Yawkey Way all year long when it came to the manager at least.

4. CELTS MAKE A RUN

The Celtics ripped off three wins in a row against the hated Heat, highlighted by Paul Pierce's dagger of a 3-pointer in LeBron James' face in Miami in Game 5. James would get the last laugh, however, with an epic Game 6 in Boston.

3. MASS EXODUS

Two of the faces of the 2007 World Series title squad, Kevin Youkilis and Josh Beckett were shipped off. When Beckett was dealt to Los Angeles along with Adrian Gonzalez and Carl Crawford in August, it was one of the biggest money swaps in MLB history.

5. PATS BEAT RAVENS

It has already gone down as one of the greatest AFC title games of all-time as the Patriots edged the Ravens. Baltimore would have been the one representing the AFC in the Super Bowl had Lee Evans not allowed Sterling Moore to strip the ball at the last second in the end zone. Billy Cundiff will be known as the goat in this one, however, as he missed a 32-yarder that would have sent the game to OT.

2. PATS A PLAY AWAY

The Pats were up 17-15 against the Giants with 4:06 left in Super Bowl XLVI when Wes Welker dropped a high pass from Tom Brady. On the final play of the game, Gronk almost pulled off a miracle when he nearly hauled in a Hail Mary throw that was tipped in the air. Instead, the ball dropped to the ground and the Pats had suffered their second Super Bowl defeat to the Giants in four years.

1. ALY'S ASCENT

Nancy Kerrigan had long been Boston's Olympic sweetheart ... that is until Aly Raisman hit the scene. The Needham native was the captain of the gold medal winning U.S. women's gymnastics team at the 2012 summer games in London and became a household name overnight. Team honors gave way to individual triumphs as Raisman captured the bronze medal in the balance beam final and also became the first American woman to win the gold medal in the floor exercise. MATT BURKE

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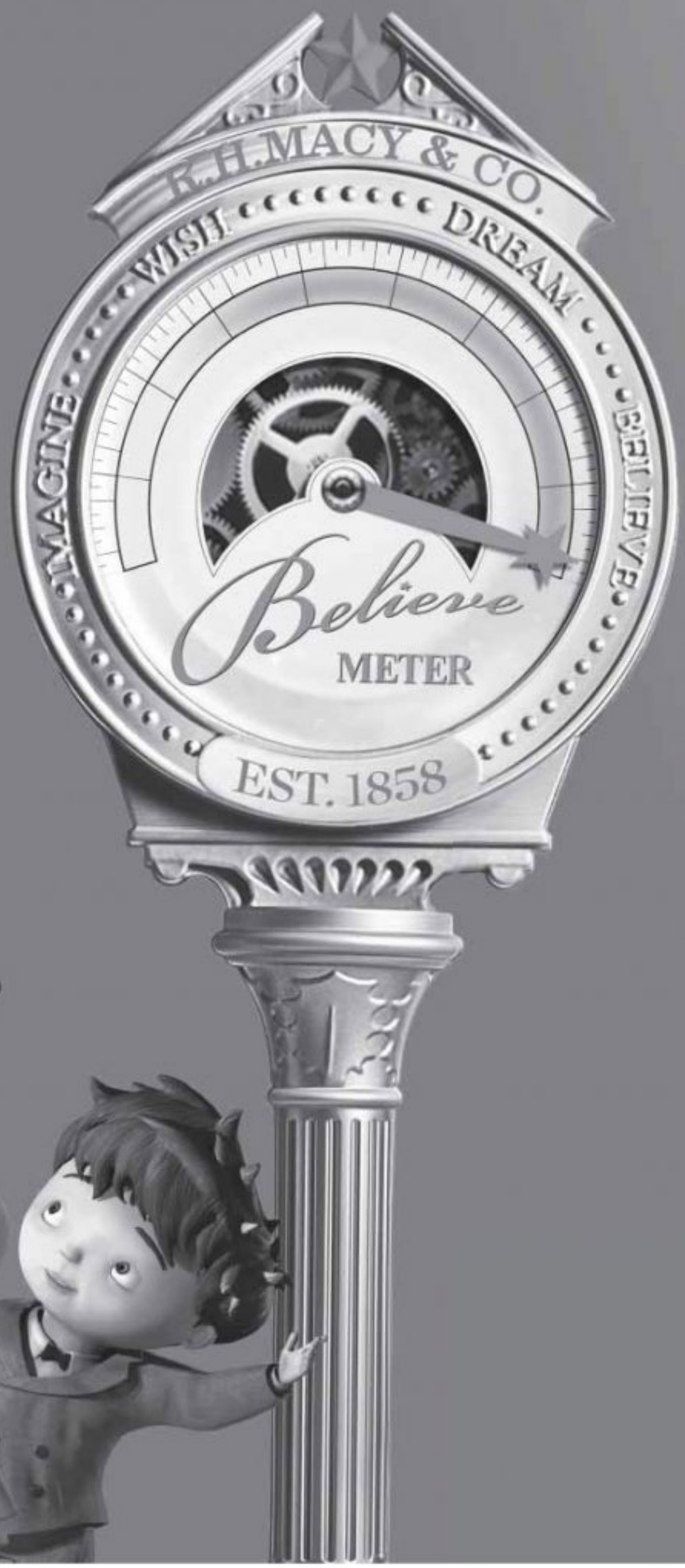

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